

# **Paul Cuffee School**

## **Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 25, 2010**

**A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Paul Cuffee School was held on March 25, 2010 at the Paul Cuffee Lower School in Providence, Rhode Island.**

**Present: Su Almeida, Luz Avila, David Burnham, Russell Carey, William Clifton, Sr., Allyn Copp, Joan Canady Countryman, Stefano Crema, Keith Mathews, Maria Monteiro, Joop Nagtegaal, Martha Newcomb, Dorothy Patrick, Carolyn Pemberton, Sarah Reis, Ana Cecilia Rosado, Babak Taleghani.**

**Excused: Kathleen Alvarez, Elizabeth Colon, Philip Gould, Leanne Nyahkoon.**

**Paul Cuffee Staff Present: David Bourns, Jonathan Conklin, Nina Giannotti, Julia Karahalidis, Tina McDonough, Nell Sears.**

**The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. President Joop Nagtegaal began by welcoming everyone to the March meeting of the Board of Trustees and asking for a moment of silence.**

**In his opening comments Joop remarked briefly on the number of exciting developments on the agenda and suggested we turn**

**immediately to business.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

**The minutes of the January 21, 2010 meeting of the Board were approved unanimously, with one correction noted and made. The motion to approve was made by Ana Cecilia Rosado and seconded by Keith Mathews.**

### **Head of School March Report**

**David Bourns referred to his written report and reviewed several highlights, including the great work Maria Monteiro and others are doing to lobby the General Assembly for changes to the housing aid statutes. David reported that the high school principal search had recently concluded with the welcome news that Becky Coustan had accepted the position. He noted that to date 950 applications have been received for the Paul Cuffee lottery, including 75 for the ninth grade. There were questions and comments from members of the Board.**

### **Recommendation of the Head of School Search Committee**

**Russell Carey and Carolyn Pemberton presented the report of the Head of School Search Committee, which had been presented to and approved by the Executive Committee at their meeting on Tuesday,**

March 23rd, and the unanimous recommendation of the Committee that Michael Obel-Omia be appointed the next Head of School. Russell reviewed the activities of the Search Committee since the January report to the Board, including the process by which semi-finalists were selected and interviewed, the finalist visits to the school community, the collection and review of stakeholder feedback, and the final decision-making process. He reported that there was widespread support and enthusiasm for the candidacy of Michael Obel-Omia, and Joop reported that Michael is similarly enthusiastic about the opportunity to help lead Paul Cuffee School. Following questions and discussion, it was moved by Babak Taleghani that Michael Obel-Omia be appointed Head of Paul Cuffee School. Judge Clifton seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees and met with applause by all. Joop and the Board expressed appreciation to the Search Committee for their hard and diligent work, and to Nina Giannotti for her excellent support of the entire search process.

### **Paul Cuffee School Performance on NECAPs**

Nell Sears led a presentation on the results of the NECAP tests Paul Cuffee School students took in October. She reviewed data and results which had been sent to the Board in advance, as well as other information and context regarding the test scores. She explained how the tests are administered in October but test material taught in the prior grade year. She also explained the differences between percent

proficient data and mean scaled scores, and how the teachers and staff use the data from the tests to evaluate individual student performance, efficacy of curriculum, and other aspects of the educational and instructional program. Overall Paul Cuffee students scored consistent with the 2008 NECAPs, which had been a significant increase from 2007. While there continues to be room for improvement, data presented demonstrated favorable results at Paul Cuffee compared to other urban charter and traditional public schools and statewide results. There were questions and comments from members of the Board.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Nominating Committee**

Joan Countryman delivered the report of the Nominating Committee. She referred to the written report and asked if there were any questions. Joop noted the discussion the committee is having of potential by-laws changes regarding the terms of the descendant of Paul Cuffee and the Treasurer and anticipated that recommendations for appropriate changes would be forthcoming at one of the two remaining Board meetings this year.

### **Finance Committee**

**Babak Taleghani delivered the report of the Finance Committee. While we continue to anticipate about a break-even result in the current fiscal year, the uncertainties around revenue given the financial situation in the state and the city remain high. There was discussion of the various possible scenarios and the work the school is engaged in with regard to moderating expenses both in the current fiscal year and planning for next year. It was noted that the financial outlook for the school, while buoyed by careful planning and management, will continue to be a significant challenge for the coming years. The proposed funding formula for public education adds additional uncertainty to the financial picture.**

**Following that discussion, Martha Newcomb moved that the recommendation of the Finance Committee that a recent unrestricted gift of \$300,000 be transferred from operating funds to the Capital Expansion portion of the Board Designated Reserve be approved. Dave Burnham seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.**

**Babak then reported on the status of the Living Room acquisition, which continues to near completion, although the total costs of acquisition, environmental concerns, and demolition are projected to be slightly more than the originally authorized \$325,000. Martha Newcomb moved that the recommendation of the Finance Committee that an additional expenditure of \$50,000 of Capital Reserve – Expansion Board Designated Reserves for the purchase and demolition of the Living Room property, bringing the total approved**

amount to \$375,000, be approved. Carolyn Pemberton seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

## **Plant & Property Committee**

Russell Carey delivered the report of the Plant and Property Committee. He added to the prior update on the Living Room property, noting that it was anticipated with a closing in April that the structure would be demolished after the end of the school year, in June. A modest amount of work will be completed to ensure the safety of the site and to prepare it to serve as a temporary parking area for the time being. Dan Moos has prepared an RFP for a landscape architect, and plans will be developed for the future development of the property for both the parking needs of the School and additional green and play space for students. That design process will take some time, both to complete and to ensure it is appropriately folded into the Stage II master plan for facilities which will be completed over the course of the next year. When a design is complete and approved, funding will also need to be secured before any work can be undertaken.

With regard to the short-term location for the High School, progress continues to be made and the committee is very confident that an appropriate and affordable location for the ninth grade will be secured in the near future. Negotiations for an available parochial school are underway and the prospects look very good.

On the long-term front, Russell reported that the School had received Stage I Necessity for School Construction Application approval from the Rhode Island Department of Education. This is a very important step, and the School now has authority to move forward with the Stage II application process, which must be completed within one year. Stage II approval is necessary to receive housing aid reimbursement for any capital project, including the Living Room property and construction or renovation of a School-owned property for the High School and Middle School. It was noted that 80% housing aid reimbursement is critical for new construction or significant renovation of an existing facility to be a viable option for Paul Cuffee in terms of the long-term solution for the high school. Given the one year to complete the Stage II application and the two years that the short-term solution will be able to accommodate the high school program, there is a great deal of urgency to move the planning process forward. The committee discussed that need in detail at their most recent meeting, and David, Russell and Dan will be meeting next week to plan next steps consistent with the committee's discussion and the needs of the School. There were questions and comments from members of the Board.

## **Other Business**

Julia reported on several upcoming events at the Lower and Middle Schools, and that the School is only \$16,000 away from achieving the

**Annual Fund goal of \$110,000. There was no other business brought before the Board.**

## **Adjournment**

**Babak Taleghani moved to adjourn. Martha Newcomb seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Russell C. Carey, Clerk**